

Defend The Bible? I Would As Soon Defend A Lion!

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*"Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion!
Unchain it and it will defend itself."* – Charles
Spurgeon

There are at least three polar approaches to Christian Apologetics: (1) the Evidentialist Approach – that claims to prove God on the basis of non-biblical evidence, (2) the Reformed Approach – that claims the knowledge of God to already be basic to our epistemic frame, and (3) the Fideistic Approach – that rules out any extra evidence other than the Divine Self-Revelation itself.

Epistemically speaking, one also finds (1) the Rational Approach – for instance, the Ontological Arguments, that try to prove God on pure *a priori* rational bases, (2) the Empirical Approach – for instance, the Design Arguments and the Arguments from Miracles and Religious Experiences, that try to prove God on the basis of empirical evidences, and (3) the Intuitive Approach – that claim recognition of Truth as a faculty function (like the

faculty of eye recognizing colors), without the need of extra evidence.

A closer look into the psychology of belief, however, will soon prove that evidence is the function of a subjective epistemological framework (SEF); thus, what counts as evidence for A in (SEF-1) might not count as evidence for B in (SEF-2). The subjective epistemological framework functions as the hermeneutic grid of knowledge acquisition and belief formation. Usually, a number of SEFs share a cultural pattern (a number of people in a particular culture would look at things in the same way and reason in the same manner); however, in modern times, the trend is towards individualistic hermeneutical patterning. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) in *Truth and Method*, (1960) has shown that an SEF can undergo transformation through encounter with new information. An SEF is not static but dynamic, enlarging, and changing. But that involves time, though in time an SEF can arrive at such a form (e.g. Western mind-set) that it is no longer able to relate to its previous form (e.g. Eastern mind-set). Also, Richard Swinburne (*Faith and Reason*, 1981) has shown that it is possible that a person who has acquired a set of beliefs for certain reasons that he believes are valid at a particular time may no longer remember those reasons later on, though holding on to the beliefs yet ardently. In the same vein, it is possible that the same reasons might not look very much evidential from a latter perspective (later SEF). For instance,

say a person was converted to Christ after finding that a passage in the Vedas found fulfillment in the Bible. His Vedic SEF gave evidential functional value (EFV) to the Biblical revelation. However, later on his hermeneutical methods undergo change and he questions his own previous interpretation; however, he doesn't abandon his Christian faith because his present SEF had undergone a transformation in which new evidences stand in support of his faith.

But, then the question arises: Aren't there some basic and absolute determinants within an SEF that are uniform, immutable, and basic to the epistemic framework of all humans, in fact to truth itself? Yes, they are there. And, it is here that the role of Christian Apologetics comes into play: to clear the bushes, to challenge false and speculative references in an SEF, to present truth in a way that would bring in a transformation of an SEF to accord with the truth. This is what is also meant by the renewing of the mind and transformation of a person. But, to get to that basic platform, there are a number of fallacious overgrowths that need to be first cleared away. It is only when the dirt from the glass is cleaned away that the light of truth can shine fully through. But, that is a gradual process (something that is doctrinally referred to as part of sanctification). In the initial point however, the Gospel breaks through the cloudy nest of ideas that one is struggling with, rips the veil off, and shines in to regenerate the mind. Salvation is first and foremost a spiritual experience of intellectual

deliverance. There are some who gradually come into it; but, there is always a point of decision though one may not remember such a point specifically later on.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. “ (Titus 2:11-14)